A. If the AFF does not hold unconditional theory interpretations, they must specify a list of what T and theory interps they would concede to in the first speech. To clarify, you must provide a list of specific theory interpretations you will be willing to concede to in the text of the 1AC.

B. Violation:

C. Standard is Strategy skew:

a) This makes the AC a moving target since you get to pick interps to comply with or reject based on what you think you can win [or reject those you don’t have the best theory frontlines against] – allows you to pick and choose to optimize your strategy while I’m the dark – allows gives you a massive edge on the theory debate since you can reject interps you’re most ready for.

b) You get tons of extra time to prep if you reject an interp since you get to know exactly what shell I’ll go for – kills my strategy since you should always be able to win theory debates if you know what’s coming several minutes ahead. Also kills my ability to prep since I don’t know if I need to prep a shell until CX, means I can’t extemp or write theory during your speech and lose 6 min of time to form a strategy and generate args.

c) You skew CX time - I should be able to clarify the way the AC functions and formulate a strategy, but instead I have to check multiple interpretations to see what you will comply with – kills my ability to develop an understanding of the AFF.

d) Can only possible benefit the AFF since NEGs don’t have to choose as many interps as the AFF – means that even if my indicts against your spike are false, this is the tiebreaker since the strategy advantage is un-reciprocal.

A. Interpretation: Debaters who make permissibility arguments must specify in the text of the AC [in the form of a list] the set of conditions under which presumption can become relevant in the evaluation of the round. [i.e. if there is some kind of defense to the AC framework or NC framework which “triggers,” someone fails to extend offense, skepticism, utilitarianism, I won’t trigger presumption – it’s a preempt, drop the advocacy T + winning the framework debate etc.]

B. Violation:

C. Standards:

1) scope of ground – the ability for me to contest the implications of permissibility and way it flows or form a strategy to engage the aff depends on my knowing what kind of arguments are enough to justify the judge voting on it. This is key to fairness since it skews the ability for me to contest the argument, resolve competing claims about permissibility, or figure out how to respond to the aff.

2) stable implications - absent specification of these conditions you can choose whether and how to go for permissibility based on my NC strat [examples] This kills fairness since your 1ar can shift the implication depending on what’s most strategic on theory. You’re incentivized to trigger an argument [since I can no longer contest it] which gives them bidirectional ground and moots neg offense and strategy – [making each trigger a no-risk voting issue]. I don't know if or when they will trigger permissibility or how the judge will use presumption to evaluate certain debates, which increases intervention. My interp encourages better quality ground by forcing debaters to go for offensive arguments unless they’re held to what they say in the AC.

[Abuse is supercharged by the aff – i.e. there’s lots of blip theory spikes/obvious triggers so I don’t know how the round will be resolved based on my 1N strategy.]

[AND, this shell always comes first since presumption arguments in the 1ar mean the ballot collapses to that layer – so being behind there is especially bad for the neg.]

Overview: I should be able to respond to spikes when they’re extended in the next speech [when they don’t have an explicitly delineated a interp, violation, reasons to prefer, voter, and implication for the round]

#### 1. Clash – spikes incentivize hiding arguments to take out neg positions without engaging them – kills a developed discussion of the topic which is key to education, and key to having positions to answer the aff instead of having them taken out so it’s key to fairness

2. Spikes aren’t complete arguments since they don’t apply to me yet, so it would be unstrategic to answer them since I don’t know how they function. Otherwise I have to answer every warrant in the aff, which A) kills argument interaction since I should be able to concede some of their args to bolster mine; and B) skews neg time since there are too many aff warrants to answer, whereas they’ll extend whatever I undercover to automatically win arguments.

3. specialized vocab means the functions of spikes is unclear in the first speech. **THOMPSON[[1]](#footnote-1):** A second reason to think this is the specialized vocabulary that has grown up around debate terms. **What exactly does it mean to ‘prefer,’ what is ‘comply or conflict,’ what** exactly **is entailed by ‘competing interpretations,’** **what does it mean for X to be a ‘voter,’** what are the conditions of ‘fairness’. I assume that **no one thinks that fairness or education are monolithic concepts**, thus I might agree with you that the argument is ‘educational’ in the way you use the word education, but not in the sort of education debate should value. **Until the entire argument is out there and put to use, there is no framework of verification** for what those words mean. **Debaters from different regions, camps and contexts will interpret different spikes differently** and thus we should wait to verify how it used before being expected to answer it. Once when expressing this opinion, it was responded that debaters should just make the argument that the implication was unclear and they can have that debate in round. The problem is, that debate starts too late. The negative does not get a chance to contest the application of the spike till the 2nr, and any judge will tell you it is basically impossible to assess a debate that start in the 2nr, the judge will almost always just end up siding with which opinion they think is right (which will again stem from their region, school, camps etc.). No article would be complete without a dubiously applied, decontextualized aphorism of Wittgenstein’s so I will end this argument with “For a large class of cases of the employment of the word ‘meaning’—though not for all—this way can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its *use* in the language” (PI 43, emphasis added).

4. Arguments have a function only when they are applied – need to understand purpose before I can legitimately respond otherwise encourage infinite abuse since it leads to skew in rebuttals. **MARSHALL THOMPSON:[[2]](#footnote-2)** A lot of **spikes don’t have all of their in round** strategic **implications yet** . Thus, **if I read the AC gets RVIs it is fairly clear** (not entirely given the differences between I meets and what nots) what that means for the NC speech. However, **if the neg does not read theory**, then **the idea** that the argument was conceded and therefore cannot be answered **has weird implications**. For instance t**he aff can now be far more abusive in the 1ar, because they know if the neg runs theory in the 2n they wont have to split 2ar time because the RVI is already conceded**. Sense the purpose an argument is put to, can change throughout the debate, the ability to respond to arguments should be preserved until the argument is positively put to a purpose (like positively justifying why you affirm in the aff, or positively justifying why I get an RVI on ‘this’ theory shell).

5. Premises only have conditional strength – means I should be able to answer them later. **THOMPSON[[3]](#footnote-3):** First, **you can only assess an argument** by **knowing the way it is used**. Because different uses of the same premise, will give the argument more or less credence. If I have a set of premises that entail a conclusion, those premises may cause me to accept the conclusion. However, I could also, given how much I doubt the conclusion give up on the premises. Thus for instance, **if I started with the premise ‘I am not dreaming right now’** (which I do not think I am) **that would lead me to think ‘I really am on a bus going** **to the airport.**’ However, **if that premise lead me to think ‘that** really **is my prize watermelon** yodeling **over the Swiss Alps**, **I would** instead **have reason to rethink my premise** (**perhaps I am dreaming** after all). (Incidentally this is one of several reasons why the idea of a ‘skep trigger’ does not make sense. Just because my premise was strong enough to be part of an argument that your moral theory is false, does not mean it is strong enough to be part of an argument that no moral theory is true). . Now, **before someone applies a spike, the strength of the conclusion is not there**. Will the RVI apply to I-meets or only counter interpretations? Will the 1AR do something abusive that I will want to read theory against? Does prefer aff offense mean ‘always prefer’ or just ‘give it some higher credence’? Will no Neg RVIs suddenly apply to even if they read 3 new shells in the 1AR? **The spike may seem reasonable in the context of the AC, but unreasonable in the context of the 1AR.** A good example is a round I saw this last weekend. The affirmative read a spike that basically said the negative can only have one layer of offense (like only substance or only theory). The negative missed it and read theory and an NC. The aff extends it, but then also goes heavily for ‘reasonability’ against the negative theory. Now, by the ‘reasonability threshold’ the 1AR read it was clear that the spike was ‘unreasonable.’ I feel we should all agree that the negative should be allowed to argue that in the context of reasonability in the 1AR the spike should not be applied, however it strikes me that if all spikes are first ‘applied’ in the 1AR and thus the context of the 1AR should be provided to answer the argument. Therefore, given that one cannot assess the ‘conclusion’ of the spike, because the conclusion assumes the context of the 1AR, there it is unreasonable to expect the negative to try to answer the argument.

A. Interp: [if the text of the spikes are not disclosed on the NDCA wiki at least 20 minutes before the round] all potentially offensive affirmative theoretical arguments must be read in the form of a preemptive shell with prewritten labeled interpretation, delineated components, internal links from standards, a written out voter or voters, punitive implications of theory, explanation of possible a violation, and framing of the paradigm like competing interps or reasonability. [All individual spikes must be numbered separately and spaced out – you cannot have multiple offensive arguments hidden under a single number.] [Paradigm issues and interpretational issues must also have complete standards and internal links]. Err toward spirit of the interp since otherwise semantic I meets allow abuse even when there is a deficit to fairness.

B. Violation:

C. Standards:

1. Strategy Skew:

**a)** No-risk theory. If I drop the spike in my NC because I genuinely don’t believe I link, the 1AR can make nonsensical violations in that become no-risk issues for the AFF. Any risk of a violation becomes a voter, so I can only win by proving 100% terminal defense on an I-meet, so I’m always behind on the theory debate. Supercharged since meanings of interpretations in the 1ac are unclear and haven’t been applied yet, so judges grant abuse stories through the standards level even if the interpretation has not generated a link. *[AND, without clear interps and standards arguments, I can’t tell if the theory interp violates any shell I might read against it, since it’s impossible to prove a violation.]*

**b)** moving target – you can change the function of your theory argument since it’s unclear in the AC to benefit you based on NC strategy without a clear separate and developed shell. I shouldn’t be afraid to run a neg strat because of what you might make up in the 1AR. Prevents me from engaging the AC and kills my ground.

**c)** Harder to answer your theory:

1) I don’t know the text of the interp, which means I don’t know what norm they propose and how I can meet it. I-meets and competitive interps are harder to generate, which means all I get are no-abuse claims. Under offense-defense, it’s impossible to win on theory.

2) The arg appeals to implicit standards, which are never justified. It's comparatively harder to point out and refute all the implicit assumptions without a structured shell, and I can't weigh against theory args in a non-theory format. They have no internal links into voters or assume them, making it harder to refute as I can't formulate competitive links into those voters or outweigh them.

3) Debaters can conceal defects by combining distinct components and arguments together like standards and voters. This makes it harder to me to link and impact turn them since it's difficult to delineate between claim, warrant, and impact.

4) Potential violations also key to clarify the meaning and function of your interpretation – even if your AC interpretation is clear, its application to 1nc arguments isn’t – knowing clear limits on what your interp includes and excludes key.

All this skew to theory ground is loss of essential ground since theory directly implicates the ballot – means this outweighs subsantive skew.

**d**) Punitive and paradigm implications:

1) This skews 1N strategy since I can’t attach an RVI in the 1N. Since they never specified drop the debater or drop the argument, theory can’t be an RVI since we don’t know what the implication is yet. This isn’t reciprocal since they can always read an RVI; I can’t read a new voter in the 2nr. Reciprocity is key since equity is the basis of competition. You also screw time allocation since whether it’s drop the debater or argument controls how I engage the spikes.

2) Not specifying CI or reasonability skews 1N strategy; I don’t know if I need to generate offense with a counter-interp or just argue defensive responses.

3) Moving target; you can use your implied voter to say drop the argument or debater or fairness or education is not a voter if I choose to read an RVI or no RVI or certain types of shells. My interpretation is key to a stable 1AC.

**e)** Numbering/separation - They prevent a coherent strategy; they label spikes in such a way that detracts from my ability to catch them. Arguments that are hidden so I can’t respond. Also destroys clash because they avoid substantive debate by trying to win off hiding spikes. Clash precludes other education because it’s the foundation of rejoinder in debate and fairness because I need to engage in a debate in order to win.

D. Fairness is a voter since debate is a competitive activity adjudicated on the basis of wins and losses so no debater ought to have a structural advantage. Drop the debater a)substance is already skewed – you’ve altered my time and strategy through the abusive spikes and forced me to hold you accountable so theory is the only place you can still vote since you can longer tell who has done the better debating and b) it deters abusive arguments in the future – the loss of a priori arguments in debate proves and c) always drop the debater on spikes since you’ll get a positive time tradeoff if you do anything else since they’re quicker to read than indict with a shell. Use competing interps since reasonability is arbitrary; I don’t know your threshold so use the standards debate as a measure. Also, reasonability motivates debaters to use unfair strategies and get away by merely playing defense on theory, so even under reasonability use offense-defense. Also, theory against spikes can always be construed as reasonable since their function is unclear [in the AC], so we should evaluate whether they’re better for debate as a whole.

no loss to the aff –

**a)** even if a full shell is too much, you can still read theory in the 1AR if I cause abuse, but they’re forced to be more complete full shells. Controls the internal link to any arg why theory is good; developed shells are more likely to win and I’ve lost prep time to respond by the 2N – judges will vote on 1ar theory but not always blippy spikes.

**b)** Just need extra components to make them work – since you are willing to invest so much time in the AC on spikes regardless, the few extra hoops should not be problem. Huge strength of link mitigation on the offense you can get there.

**c)** No reason why spikes are key ground in the first place.

**d)** This also links into education – instead of making paragraph theory purely an excuse for getting rid of substantive debate and winning on blip spikes, I ensure that your theory shell is more developed and I know exactly whether I link or not.

And spikes exclude individuals with learning disabilities. **THOMPSON[[4]](#footnote-4):** First, I think that **evaluating who is the better debater via** who **dropped spikes** **excludes** lots of specific **individuals**, especially those **with learning disabilities**. I have both moderate dyslexia and extreme dysgraphia.  Despite debating for four years with a lot of success I was never able to deal with spikes. I could not ‘mind-sweep’ because my flow was not clear enough to find the arguments I needed, and I was simply too slow a reader to be able to reread through the relevant parts of a case during prep-time.

I was very lucky, my junior year (which was the first year I really competed on the national circuit) spikes were remarkably uncommon. Looking back it was in many ways the low-point for spike. They started to be used some my senior year but not anything like the extent they are used today. I am entirely confident, however, in saying that **if spikes had** had **anywhere near the same prevalence** when **I** started doing ‘circuit’ debate as they do now, I—with the specific ways that dyslexia/dysgraphia has affected me—**would never have bothered to try to debate national circuit LD** (I don’t intend to imply this is the same for anyone who has dyslexia or dysgraphia, the particular ways that learning disabilities manifest is often difficult to track). Now, the mere fact that I would have been prevented from succeeding in the activity and possibly from being able to enjoyably compete is not an argument. I never would have been able to succeed at calligraphy, but I would hardly claim we should therefore not make the calligraphy club about handwriting. Instead, what I am suggesting is that **the values that debate cares about** and should be assessing **are not questions of handwriting or notation**. We expect notation instrumentally to avoid intervention, but it is not one of the ends of debate in itself. Thus, if there is a viable principle upon which we can decrease this strategic dimension of spikes but maintain non-intervention I think we should do so. I was ‘good’ at philosophy, ‘good’ at argument generation, ‘good’ at research, ‘good’ at casing, ‘great’ at framework comparison etc. It seems to me that as long as I can flow well enough to easily follow a non-tricky aff it was proper that my learning disabilities not be an obstacle to my success. (One other thing to note, while I was a ‘framework debater’ who could never have been good at spikes because of my learning disability I have never met a ‘tricky debater’ who could not have succeeded in debate without tricks simply in virtue of their intelligence and technical proficiency; that is perhaps another reason to favor my account.) Second, **spikes add in a greater dimension of randomness** to the round. If they are seen then they are ‘caught’ then they don’t really help you win, if they are not they do. **Against most debaters one can ‘reliably’ beat them or will ‘reliably’ lose to them. With cases with lots of spike** however, **one might generally beat them and** then **once just miss a spike and it is all over.** If the round were to have happened at a different time then the spike might have been caught. This ‘luck’ dimension strikes me as at least giving reason to think it does not track with what we want when assessing who did the better debating.

A. interpretation: debaters who read potentially offensive theory interpretations in the AC must disclose the full text of the interpretations they have broken in their position at least 20 minutes prior to the round on the NDCA wiki.

B. Violation:

C. Standards:

1. neg strategy – spikes alter what neg strategies are permitted and not permitted, which means I should be able to know them in advance. Several net benefits:

a) substantive education – ensures that I know the interps beforehand so that I can concede to some of them or modify my NC strategy to avoid a theory debate – that is key to education since it ensures we can discuss more about the topic or philosophy.

b) shiftiness – ensures that debaters will not win for extending blip offensive arguments – theory spikes encourages no risk extensions in the 1ar, unclear function and interpretations, and wins from cheap drops. Disclosure preserves the positive time tradeoff to establishing interpretations in the AC while minimizing the risk that I lose on a theory interp I might have conceded to or at least gotten a chance to engage.

A. interpretation: debaters who claim the negative must defend the “converse” of the resolution must clarify, in the form of a text in the AC, a list of possible violations of the interp. To clarify, you must outline what types of common negative strategies, like denying the truth of the res, defending the status quo, counterplans, or kritiks, violate the interpretation.

b. violation:

c. standards:

1. No-risk theory: If I drop the spike in my NC because I genuinely don’t believe I link, the 1AR can make nonsensical violations to link me in that become no-risk issues for the AFF. Any risk of a violation becomes a voter for them, so I can only win by proving 100% terminal defense on an I-meet, so it leads to strategy skew on the theory debate. Supercharged since the meaning of converse is based on a strange LD norm that doesn't have a real meaning. The word only applies to conditional statements. **MATH WORDS[[5]](#footnote-5): Converse: Switching the**[**hypothesis**](http://www.mathwords.com/h/hypothesis.htm)**and**[**conclusion**](http://www.mathwords.com/c/conclusion.htm)**of a**[**conditional statement**](http://www.mathwords.com/c/conditional.htm). For example, the converse of "**If it is raining then the grass is wet" is "If the grass is wet then it is raining."**

Note: As in the example, a proposition may be true but have a false converse.

Also even if a converse is just supposed to mean “opposite,” it’s unclear what proving no obligation to do the resolution entails – that could be a pre-fiat K, skep or topical CP if it solved better, which are common violators spun out of this spike. You rely on norms, which leads to judge intervention since I may not have the same interpretation as you. Also makes the 1AC a moving target. You can change the function of your theory argument, since it’s unclear in the AC, to benefit you based on NC strategy without a clearly separate and developed shell. Key to fairness since I shouldn’t be afraid to run a given neg strat because of what you might make up in the 1AR. This prevents me from engaging the AC and kills my ground.

A. Interpretation: Debaters who make presumption arguments must specify in the text of the AC [in the form of a list] the set of conditions under which presumption can become relevant in the evaluation of the round. [i.e. if there is some kind of defense to the AC framework or NC framework which “triggers,” someone fails to extend offense, skepticism, utilitarianism, I won’t trigger presumption – it’s a preempt, drop the advocacy T + winning the framework debate etc.]

B. Violation:

C. Standards:

1) scope of ground – the ability for me to contest the implications of presumption and way it flows or form a strategy to engage the aff depends on my knowing what kind of arguments are enough to justify the judge voting on presumption. This is key to fairness since it skews the ability for me to contest the argument, resolve competing claims about presumption, or figure out how to respond to the aff.

2) stable implications - absent specification of these conditions you can choose whether and how to go for presumption based on my NC strat [examples] This kills fairness since your 1ar can shift the implication depending on what’s most strategic on theory. You’re incentivized to trigger an argument [since I can no longer contest it] which gives them bidirectional ground and moots neg offense and strategy – [making each presumption trigger a no-risk voting issue]. I don't know if or when they will trigger presumption or how the judge will use presumption to evaluate certain debates, which increases intervention. My interp encourages better quality ground by forcing debaters to go for offensive arguments unless they’re held to what they say in the AC.

[Abuse is supercharged by the aff – i.e. there’s lots of blip theory spikes/obvious triggers so I don’t know how the round will be resolved based on my 1N strategy.]

[AND, this shell always comes first since presumption arguments in the 1ar mean the ballot collapses to that layer – so being behind there is especially bad for the neg.]

**A-Interpretation**: the aff must unconditionally defend arguments as presented in the AC. They may not jettison theoretical interps in CX.

**B-Violation**: they have spike saying that you must clarify in cross-x and they can concede the interp.

This is unfair because:

**A)** it incentivizes AFFs to run a bunch of abusive things in the AC, and just concede the interp in cross-x hoping that the neg will miss one abusive thing, then the round is over. This has the strongest internal link into fairness because there is no risk for the aff to engage in abusive strategies, and literally encourages people to be abusive.

**B)** This skews my strategy because a) I have to waste valuable cross-x time clarifying abusive argument of asking questions that set up a coherent strategy in the NC, b) I am not allowed to run theory if I think of a potentially abusive thing in the AC during my speech. This also link turns all other theory arguments since theoretical benefits are predicated on the ability to run theory in the first place.

1. Marshall Thompson. [coach at Harrison HS and quarterfinalist at TOC]. “Musings on Debate.” Published on Victory Briefs, PDT and NSD. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Marshall Thompson. Post on Victory Briefs article by Dan A. “The Harms of Preemptive Argumentation.” [former Whitman debater and philosophy genius], 2 Nov. 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marshall Thompson. [coach at Harrison HS and quarterfinalist at TOC]. “Musings on Debate.” Published on Victory Briefs, PDT and NSD. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Marshall Thompson [debater at Whitman and coach of Harrison HS]. “Musings on Debate.” NSD, PDT, VBI. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.mathwords.com/c/converse.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-5)